

# The Daily Mining Gazette

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Houghton, Michigan

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## adoption option

Couple finds room in their hearts for 20 children

By Olivia  
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**BARAGA —**

Carol Jacker gave birth to one child, yet 20 children call her "Mom." Carol and her husband John Jacker have added to their family through adoption and fostering.

"I've always wanted a big family, but because of medical reasons, I

couldn't have more," she said. "We're a close family. Even our foster kids still refer to us as Mom and Dad."

It began in 1976 when the Jackers toyed with the idea of fostering a child. Now the Baraga couple are the parents of 12 foster and seven adopted children.

The Jackers adopted their first children in the late 1970s. They told the predecessor to the Family Independence Agency in Escanaba they would like to foster a couple of children. They got four.



Daily Mining Gazette/Olivia Bartlett

Alicia Jacker, front, plays with her rabbit, Nibbles, while her adoptive parents, Carol and John Jacker of Baraga pet their dog Wishbone. The couple adopted Alicia, 12, when she was 7 months old. Over the years, the couple has adopted seven children and fostered 12.

The agency contacted Carol Jacker and asked if she'd take a family of Native Americans girls from a reservation in Bark River. She accepted and called her husband at work.

"I told her, 'Are you nuts,'" John Jacker said.

Days later, Angela, Brenda, Marilyn and Molly walked into the Jackers' home carrying everything they owned in paper sacks.

The sacks were filled with clothes, none of which fit. To clothe them, the agency gave the Jackers \$107 per child per year.

"Just getting the kids a pair of boots and winter coat can cost that," John Jacker said. "The money we get helps out, but it's never enough. No one should consider fostering kids for the money."

Twelve-year-old Alicia is the last of the adopted children to live at home. They adopted her when she was 7 months old.

The Jackers don't believe in keeping information about their adopted children's parents from them. And they insist the children honor their ethnicity. Alicia's biological father was a member of the Ojibwa and Ottawa tribes and wanted her placed with a Native American family. John Jacker is Ojibwa and a member of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community.

"She wants to know where she's from, and we think it's very important to keep her culture alive," Carol Jacker said. "The kids must learn their culture and pass it on."

Alicia and her sister, Brenda, were both featured in the 2001 Noc Bay Trading Co. magazine wearing traditional Native American clothing.

Alicia is pictured dancing on the cover.

"I dance so much ... I dance 'til I get cramps," Alicia said.

The memories prompt laughter from her parents.

*— For a complete version of this story, please see the print edition of The Daily Mining Gazette.*

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